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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000331

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SUBJECT: IRANIAN MAJLES DELEGATION TALKS REGIONAL ISSUES
DURING BERLIN VISIT

REF: BERLIN 165

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Classified By: Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Jeffrey Rathke
for reasons 1.4(b)/(d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Iran Majles Foreign Affairs Committee chair Alaeddin Boroujerdi led a Majles delegation visit to Berlin March 4-6, meeting with Interior Minister Schaeuble, as well as a variety of senior Chancellery officials and Bundestag MPs. Boroujerdi expressed Iran's interest in increased cooperation on Afghanistan but was critical of NATO's current approach. He was pleased by the U.S. intent to invite Iran to the March 31 Afghanistan conference, calling it a "good signal." On Israel-Palestine issues, he maintained the Iranian hardline approach; he also expressed concern at Germany's position on the MEK and PJAK. Contacts say German interlocutors challenged a number of hardline Iranian positions, with Schaeuble being particularly blunt in his criticism of Iran's stance on the nuclear issue and Israel. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) A Majles delegation led by Iranian Foreign Affairs Committee chair Alaeddin Boroujerdi met March 4-6 with a variety of German government and Bundestag interlocutors. In addition to meeting Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, Boroujerdi also met with Chancellery Intelligence Chief Fritsche as well as key Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee members Ruprecht Polenz (CDU), Eckart von Klaeden (CDU), and Rolf Muetzenich (SPD). According to press reports, Boroujerdi was joined by fellow Majles MPs Fatemeh Alia, Seyyed Ali Aghazadeh, and Ahmad Avaie. In separate conversations, Post contacts affiliated with the Foreign Affairs Committee, Interior Ministry, and Chancellery have provided meeting readouts.

¶3. (C) POSITIVE IRANIAN REACTION TO CONFERENCE INVITATION, BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN ON U.S. POLICY: German-Iranian Parliamentary Friendship Committee chair and SPD MP Rolf Muetzenich told PolOff that Boroujerdi had called Secretary Clinton's intent to invite Iran to the March 31 Afghanistan conference "interesting" and thought that Iran would be clever to accept. Boroujerdi told Muetzenich that in his personal opinion, the invitation was a good signal from the U.S. Inquiring about German views of the Obama Administration, Boroujerdi told Muetzenich that Iran does not yet have a complete picture of U.S. policy, and is instead trying to piece together isolated USG statements. Muetzenich commented that he believes Boroujerdi belongs to the circle of pragmatic hardliners around Majles Speaker and former nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani (for more on Larijani's

recent positions, see reftel).

¶4. (C) FOCUS ON AFGHANISTAN: Boroujerdi focused largely on Afghanistan and adhered closely to the normal IRIG script by combining calls for increased cooperation with stark criticism of NATO efforts. Boroujerdi underscored Iran's efforts on Afghanistan, particularly on counternarcotics as drugs make their way from Afghanistan to Europe via Iran. According to a CDU staffer who attended the Majles delegation's meeting with the Foreign Affairs committee, Boroujerdi told interlocutors that 3400 Iranian soldiers have been killed on the Afghan-Iranian border and attributed these deaths to the drug trade. Boroujerdi added that the Iranian MFA, like the U.S. and Germany, has expanded its Afghanistan team but did not indicate that a special representative position had been created. German contacts have commented that counternarcotics appears to them to be the clearest avenue for increased cooperation with Iran. According to a Chancellery contact, Germany is willing to offer Iran support in addressing the counternarcotics problem, calling this type of support as "a door through which we can walk" to address other issues.

¶5. (C) Boroujerdi claimed the current NATO approach has strengthened the Taliban, a point on which Bundestag interlocutors challenged him. Boroujerdi told Foreign Affairs committee members that NATO needs to counter the perception that it is an occupying power, and demonstrate that "it will not be there forever." He also criticized attempts to differentiate between different factions of the Taliban: "there are no good Taliban", declared Boroujerdi.

¶6. (C) GERMAN INTERLOCUTORS CRITICIZE IRANIAN HARDLINE STANCE ON ISRAEL, PUT BALL IN IRAN'S COURT: On

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Israeli-Palestinian issues, Boroujerdi had a hard line, telling the Bundestag Foreign Affairs committee that not inviting Iran to the February Sharm el-Sheikh conference had been a "grave error." Boroujerdi added that reconstruction in Gaza is "impossible" without Hamas, as no long-term solution is possible if certain groups are left out. When challenged by a Greens Party Foreign Affairs Committee MP about Hamas's refusal to renounce violence, Boroujerdi called for all Palestinians to be given the right of return and called for a "free referendum" under UN observation. Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Ruprecht Polenz told Boroujerdi that such demands are an attempt to roll back history and that Iran is isolated in its position, as Arab countries have accepted the Arab Peace Plan. Similarly, Interior Minister Schaeuble turned down Boroujerdi's invitation to visit Iran, noting that while he would like to visit, the current political situation does not allow him to do so until Iran changes its position on the nuclear issue and recognizes Israel's right to exist. Muetzenich told PolOff he had also raised a number of German concerns with Boroujerdi, ranging from new IRIG statements denying the Holocaust to the continuing persecution of Iran's Bahai community.

¶7. (C) COUNTERTERRORISM: MEK AND PJAK: Boroujerdi also raised the presence of Mujaheddin-e Khalgh (MEK) and the PKK-affiliated PJAK in Germany at both the Interior Ministry and the Chancellery. Boroujerdi told Schaeuble that Germany is not doing enough to combat the two terrorist organizations despite Iran providing Germany information on the groups. Schaeuble told Boroujerdi that Germany is unwilling to extradite the PJAK's self-proclaimed leader, Abdulrahman Hajji Ahmadi, who is a German citizen. Schaeuble also told Boroujerdi that while both the MEK and PJAK are under observation by German law enforcement agencies, the two groups have not committed prosecutable deeds with evidence that would stand up in court.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Boroujerdi's positions indicate the existence of an Iranian openness for dialogue on Afghanistan, but that all discussions will be accompanied by a good deal

of "anti-imperialist" sloganeering--a line similar to that which his fellow pragmatic hardliner Larijani took at the Munich Security Conference (reftel). Far more difficult are Israel-Palestine issues, where Boroujerdi's message is largely identical to those of the hardest elements of the Iranian ruling elite. Based on the variety of reports, it seems German interlocutors were more willing to push back on controversial topics than in the past.
Koenig